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Library-Vendor Collaboration: Sleeping with the Enemy?

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From the beginning, *Collaborative Librarianship* has taken an expansive view of library collaboration. Articles have covered collaboration within libraries, between libraries, and between academic libraries and other departments on campus – all groups we can easily see as valuable partners. This journal shares examples of library cooperation that have led to improved services, doing more with less, or expanded access to resources, and we hope that other libraries can learn from these cases as they begin their own collaborative projects.

There have also been articles about library-vendor or library-publisher cooperation, which is sometimes harder for librarians to accept as truly collaborative. Often our relations with vendors and publishers come in the form of negotiations for resources on behalf of our institutions. These interactions can be tense, and sometimes even combative, so librarians are understandably often leery about collaborating with vendors and publishers.

I've had the opportunity to work closely with many publishers and vendors on interesting projects, and while I am not naïve enough to believe we always have the same goals, I do think that our goals are often compatible enough that we can consider ourselves to be partners.

In this issue of *Collaborative Librarianship*, Judy Russell and her colleagues from the University of Florida (UF) have written an article with Elsevier's Alicia Wise about their experience using ScienceDirect metadata to populate UF's institutional repository (IR). This is the first phase of a project to increase access to UF-authored articles through the IR, and it helps both parties meet funders' public access mandates. It's a case

where both UF and Elsevier achieve meaningful success in meeting their goals and should be a model for publisher-library collaboration.

Much of the reaction from the library community to news of the UF-Elsevier project has been negative. UF chose, for a number of reasons, to link to the published version of the article in ScienceDirect, directing users who can be authenticated via their institutions to the version of record, and allowing other users to request that version via interlibrary loan or pay for it. In the next phase of the project open access (OA) versions of articles will also be made available. UF has opted to focus first on the goal of increasing the visibility of UF research, with the goal of expanding open access to that research coming next.

Much of the criticism of this project centers on this setting of priorities – that OA should be more important than visibility – but underlying this, I think, is a sense that libraries shouldn't be working so closely with commercial publishers. To me, however, this seems like a reasonable partnership, one that benefits both partners as well as the broader international user community. It's not perfect, but each partner gains something and is better off than it was before.

UF is discussing an expansion of this project with CHORUS (and I have been part of those discussions on behalf of my own institution). This will increase the number of publishers participating, and will increase the value and impact of the IR. While it doesn't reach the ideal of providing full OA to all publications, it seems to me that the end result is greater access to the research output of the university, something that benefits everyone. I applaud the University of



Florida for undertaking a project that was sure to lead to criticism, and urge other libraries to consider how they can collaborate with publishers and vendors.